



**Fr Joel Jordan, S.J.**  
**(1938-1972. In Zambia 1963-1966)**

**2 January 1972**

He was one of four brothers all of whom entered the Society. Quite an achievement! One left from the novitiate, one left during theology and two were ordained priests, one of whom was Joel who was ordained in 1969.

Joel was born in Seattle USA on 14 March 1938 and after school entered the Society in 1956. Even before entering the Society, he spent a summer at Nulato, Alaska with his brother Paul, helping Fr J B Baud S.J. After philosophy at Mount St Michael's, Spokane, he departed for Northern Rhodesia in 1963 with Fr Joe Logan, just before Zambian Independence in 1964. 'He was a joyful soul in general, yet his life moved from sunshine to shadow with the moods of his artistic temperament. Getting to know him was not easy, but those who did and understood him, became his close and lasting friends'.

On arrival in Northern Rhodesia, he went to Mpima Minor Seminary, Kabwe. He was clever at languages and picked up chiNyanja during his first six months. Then he went to the High School where he taught the boys the normal academic subjects. Being a gifted musician, he gave lessons in music, especially the guitar. For a short time he assisted Fr Lou Haven who was the bishop's education secretary for the Kabwe region.

He returned to the USA for theology in 1966 - and not with the idea of returning to Africa. 'His talents had not found enough scope' within the confines of a minor seminary and he felt frustrated. Studying theology in California, the atmosphere there 'gave wings and freer air to his poetic soul'. After ordination in 1969, he launched into a doctorate program in theology and arts, a joint program at the University of California and the Graduate Theological Union (GTU). This involved English literature, poetry, creative writing, song composition, lyrics etc. He was a member of a statewide team of Catholic song writers whose numerous songs covered the whole spectrum from popular and rock to the sacred.

In 1971 he felt unwell and put aside his studies until he was better. Unfortunately the diagnosis was a malignant tumor in the lung cavity so close to the coronary artery that surgery was impossible. At Christmas, a letter went out from his family where Joel was staying, 'Yes, the cancer has spread into the spine, pelvis and hips, causing extensive paralysis of legs and very much pain. Swellings on neck and head indicate further spreading'. As yet his spirit and attitude is remarkable, joyfully awaiting heaven, happy to be in the priestly and Jesuit brotherhood. He feels impelled to tell everyone of the love of God, to forget our differences and let God's love work in us. His constant greeting is "praise God".

On the morning of 2 January 1972, in his agony (for he suffered much), Joel said 'I want to go home but I don't know how.' God took him that afternoon and he died quietly at the age of 33.